

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Idaho Wrecker Sales

Idaho TechHelp

IWS Certainly Not a Wreck

Client Profile:

Idaho Wrecker Sales (IWS) began in 1995 as a small, one-man shop in a small Idaho town of 300 people. In October 1997, a growing IWS moved to Mountain Home, Idaho, and today employs 14 people. IWS offers a full product line of towing equipment as well as sales, service and parts. The company offers custom installation, detailed painting, custom graphics and lettering, as well as new and used wreckers and carriers. IWS has a full service fabrication shop and can completely restore or customize new and used towtrucks or carriers. IWS has received a US Patent on its Power Hitch 5th Wheel Adaptor for wreckers and carriers. The company also invented the SP8000 and SP20,000 Side Pullers and the Drop Down Dollie Box, all of which are Patent Pending. With law enforcement requirements to keep one lane of traffic open, the IWS Side Pullers allow wreckers to accomplish recoveries off the side of a truck without blocking the roadway.

Situation:

IWS owner, Chuck Ceccarelli, had been trying to nail down material and design specifications/limitations for one of his unique and innovative "Side Pullers" with little success. He called Idaho TechHelp (TechHelp), a NIST MEP network affiliate, at the suggestion of an acquaintance. Within two hours, the TechHelp New Product Development Team (TechHelp NPD) had analyzed the situation and came up with an answer, free of charge. Chuck was so impressed that he brought the TechHelp NPD team in for further consultation. What the TechHelp team found at IWS was a very innovative and growing operation that after 11 years of internal organic growth could benefit from some product and process improvement.

Solution:

The TechHelp NPD Team performed the following services:

- Helped analyze and design IWS products and create drawings that were loaded to a new computerized plasma-cutting machine.
- Helped specify and install a plasma cutter that allows IWS to produce parts quickly based on customer demand and redesign parts on the fly.
- Provided professional product and process documentation for all side puller products.
- Recommended some changes in product design that made it much easier and faster to manufacturer IWS products.
- Provided on-site Lean Manufacturing training that IWS quickly adopted and implemented.
- Created design specifications, documentation and an operations manual for the new IWS Speed Dolly product.

Results:

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- * Reduced inventory, lead time and work in process and saved IWS from having to purchase 2 new buildings to accommodate growth.
- * Created a clean, efficient, orderly and safe operation where there is a place for everything and everything in its place.
- * The new IWS Plasma Cutter allows the company to produce parts quickly as per customer demand and redesign on the fly, resulting in better quality, less inventory, less scrap and much better lead time.
- * Reduced the lead-time required to produce Side Pullers from 30 days to 4 days, increasing sales and customer satisfaction.
- * Increased sales of IWS Side Pullers by 42 percent in the past year.
- * Improved product quality, service and sales.
- * Standardized training documents for IWS equipment and products reduced product cycle time and work in progress resulting in less inventory and increased cost savings.
- * Hired two new employees to meet increased product demand.
- * Used TechHelp design specifications and documentation of its new Speed Dolly product to outsource production within Idaho, allowing IWS to avoid costly capital investment and to quickly ramp up sales.

Testimonial:

"The investment I made in TechHelp services paid off beyond my wildest expectations. TechHelp made my small operation in rural Idaho look like a billion dollar business. I can't believe that more companies don't take advantage of TechHelp services."

Chuck Ceccarelli, Owner